

The Circuit That Wasn't On The Drawing

He turned off the switch, opened the breaker, and checked the prints. All three were wrong.

10 MIN

NFPA 70E Art. 120 · Art. 110 — Qualified Person

Washington State FACE 04WA080

WHAT HAPPENED

2004 · Washington · Assisted living facility · 32-year-old maintenance worker

A facility maintenance worker set out to change a metal halide bulb in a ceiling fixture about 16 feet up. He turned off the wall switch and taped it off. He used the building's as-built drawings to find and open breaker #12. But the drawings were wrong: the fixture was on an EMERGENCY lighting circuit fed from a different breaker somewhere else in the building, and no breaker anywhere was labeled as that circuit. He crawled into the attic, removed the light can, gripped the grounded fixture housing, and touched the energized bulb base with a non-insulated multi-tool. He was not found for about four hours.

WHY IT HAPPENED

He trusted a switch, a breaker, and a drawing. He never locked out and never tested. The emergency-lighting feed was a second source nobody had identified.

WHAT THE STANDARD REQUIRES

- A switch or a breaker is not an electrically safe work condition. Lock it and test it.
- Drawings are a starting point for investigation, never proof of isolation.
- Only a qualified person — qualified for THIS task on THIS equipment — performs the work.
- Emergency, life-safety, and standby circuits are designed not to go dead. Treat them that way.

TALK ABOUT IT — DO NOT SKIP THIS PART

1. Which circuits in this building will still be hot after we open the main?
2. When did we last verify our panel schedules against reality — not against the last drawing?
3. Who here would have caught this? What exactly would you have done differently?

WHAT WE WILL DO DIFFERENTLY HERE

ATTENDANCE

PRINT NAME	SIGNATURE	PRINT NAME	SIGNATURE